



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Habakkuk 2:2-3

“Habakkuk, or The Just Shall Live by Faith”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] We turn again, Lord, with thanksgiving and praise to Thee for Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. We do thank Thee for those portions of the Old Testament scriptures which have been given to us for instruction and for exhortation and also as passages that point us on to the coming of the personal redeemer the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray that Thou will give us again the ability to understand. We acknowledge, Lord, that our minds are naturally blinded and we do need the illumination of the Holy Spirit. And we pray that our understanding may not only be the knowledge that touches our intellect but also touches those other aspects of our life that lead to righteousness and holiness in Christian living. We ask that the needs that we also have in our daily life may be met through the confidence engendered through the study of the word. We remember the prophets words “The just shall live by faith” and we do desire, Lord, to live by trust in Thee so increase our faith through the study of the word.

We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

[Message] Tonight we’re turning to Habakkuk chapter 2 in verse 2 through verse 20 and our subject is “Habakkuk, or The Just Shall Live by Faith.” One thing that stands out in the prophecy of Habakkuk is the fact that human history is providentially directed

to the accomplishment of God’s purposes. The writer of the Book of Proverbs says “A man’s heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps.” And that is the expression of the fact that the final analysis it is the Lord who determines the particular path that our life shall take. We may make all of our plans and all of our schemes and all of our honest attempts to look into the future, but in the final analysis, it is the Lord who directs our steps. And we certainly see this in the history of Israel as set forth in the book of Habakkuk. And Habakkuk is learning, as a result of his encounter with the Lord, this great lesson that human history is providentially used by God to the accomplishment of his purpose.

Now, we also learn the answer to another and always relevant question, why do the wicked prosper? We sometimes puzzle over that and as you know there are many passages in the Bible that touch that question. Preeminently, the 73<sup>rd</sup> Psalm stands out as an illustration of that. The psalmist puzzled over how it was possible for ungodly men to prosper as the prospered and the righteous seem to lack the prosperity that they have. And he said that this thing was a great problem to him and troubled him greatly until he went into the sanctuary and saw there latter end. He saw the end of the unrighteous and then he also saw the glory and the glorious future that is in prospect for the righteous.

Now, I am sure that that is another lesson that is before us here because we learn hear that if we were to look at things from the outward it might seem that the Chaldeans were really blessed by God and that Israel was really cursed because he was using this unrighteous nation to judge those who at least were more righteous than they.

Now, of course, Peter in his epistles dwells greatly upon that theme too. And he reminds us of the fact that the present history through which we’re passing is designed ultimately to accomplish the great ends and goals that God has. He warned that there would come in the last day’s scoffers who were walking after their own lusts and would say “Where is the promise of his coming.” And he went on to say as he developed that theme that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.

You do not really learn the true state of things by looking at them in present time.

Sometimes it takes hundreds of years to see the truth of great events and what we need is the patience of the Lord.

Now, let me, just for a moment, review. There is a story that I heard about twenty years ago from a Presbyterian minister in California. He was speaking at a Bible conference and he said there was a man who was out on his farm back in the barn milking a cow. And when he has just finished milking the cow something happened that made it necessary for him to go into the house. And when he returned he found that the cow had drunk all the milk. And he said “Oh well it was weak and watery stuff, I don’t guess it will hurt if I run it through twice.”

So I want to run it through twice now for you because I’m sure some of you may have forgotten the lessons that I was trying to set forth. This prophecy is really very simple in its major outlines. The prophet has a problem with the state of the nation. He speaks about violence in the opening four verses. He asks the Lord, and notice he asks the Lord, he does not complain to men he complains to the Lord, about violence and why the Lord makes him look upon this violence and does not seem to do anything about it. And he asks for an answer and the Lord gives him an answer. And in the 5th through 11th verses he tells him that he is going to have an answer to the question how long and why, and, furthermore, the answer is going to come in his own day, that is, the prophet’s day. And he warns him or prophesied to him the Chaldeans are going to come and they are going exercise great judgment as an instrument of God upon the land and the people and at the end of their exercise in judgment, God is going to hold them guilty. Well that puzzles the prophet further so in the 12th verse and following he asks another question, “How is it that a holy God can use an unholy instrument such as the Chaldeans.” And now the answer to this second question is going to be given. So he has had a question and he has had an answer, and now he has a new question and he’s going to have another answer.

So we’re going to read beginning at verse 2.

“Then the Lord answered me and said ‘record the vision.’” Oh I did intend for you to look at the outline. “Then the Lord answered me and said ‘record the vision and inscribe it on tablets that the one who reads it may run. For the vision is yet for the appointed time. It hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it for it will certainly come, it will not delay. Behold as for the proud one, (that of course, is the Chaldens) as for the proud one his soul is not right (crooked, the Hebrew word means) that his soul is not right within but the righteous will live by his faith.”

Now, I want to look, particularly, at verses 2 and 3 in which God through the prophet announces an answer. Now, there are three things that are emphasized in this vision or about the vision, the Lord answered me and said, by the way we have a very good practical lesson here. If we’re going to get answers from the Lord, we must be prepared for three steps, or at least two. One, we must commit the matters to the Lord as he has done. He has complained to the Lord. And then he also says in verse 1, “I will stand on my guard post and station myself on the rampart and I will keep watch to see what he will speak to me.” We need not only committal of the problems to the Lord but if we follow the prophet’s example, we should expect an answer. That really is simply the attitude of faith and then I think also we may, in reasoning from this, infer that if we are to obtain our answer it may also require a little endurance. So in order to have an answer to our prayers we need to commit our problems to the Lord in prayer, to expect by faith that God will answer, and endure for the answer.

Now, the answer may come immediately, it may come much later. Some answers to our prayers may not even come while we are living. There are many illustrations of this, answers to prayers after we have died. But endurance is often necessary. The answer often is yes. Sometimes the answer is no. Frequently, the answer is wait.

Now, here we read “Then the Lord answered me.” So Habakkuk got his answer and he emphasizes three things I say about the vision. Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets, that is, it’s going to be clear, put it out on the tablets. The Hebrew word means tablets. If you have the Authorized Version, I believe that it has some other translations for that word, but it means tablets. Inscribe it on tablets so Habakkuk is told. And second “It is going to come at the end.” Now, this is an interesting statement he says “For the vision is yet for the appointed time, it hastens toward the goal, and it will not fail.” That word, incidentally, translated hastens here is a Hebrew word that means to gasp toward the end, like an Olympic runner who is running the mile or the five mile or even the marathon. He finds it very difficult to breathe after he’s past the finish line. So it hastens toward the goal, gasps toward the end.

Now, it is possible that this prophecy that he is going to give is a prophecy that is not completely fulfilled in the day of Habakkuk but looks on toward the future Messianic times. The terms of the Hebrew text would seem to suggest that that maybe true. And then there are some indications that that is possible by some statements that he makes. For example, verse 14 says “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” But the primary reference is to the day of Habakkuk and the coming of the Chaldeans and their ultimate destruction shortly thereafter.

The third thing the Lord emphasizes about the vision is that it is certain. Verse 3 says, “Though it tarries, wait for it for it will certainly come it will not delay.” The Hebrew again says “Coming it shall come it shall not be late.” So here then Habakkuk is told right at the beginning that he has an answer and that the answer is clear it shall come at the end, it shall gasp toward the end and it is certain it shall surely come.

Now, the answer itself is given the verses that following beginning at verse, well in verse 4 and 5 and then the details in the verses that follow. Let me read now verses 4 and 5, I didn’t read the 5th verse beforehand. “Behold as for the proud one his soul is

not right within him but the righteous will live by his faith. Furthermore, wine betrays the haughty man so that he does not stay at home. He enlarges his appetite like Sheol and he is like death never satisfied. He also gathers to himself all nations and collects to himself all peoples.” This passage contains the central thought of the Prophecy of Habakkuk and I can put it both in a kind of negative and positive way. In the outline I think I have put there “The failure of the Faithless - capital A which is found in verse 4 A - “Behold as for the proud one his soul is not right within him.” And then in verse 5 “Furthermore, wine betrays the haughty so that he does not stay at home. He enlarges his appetite like Sheol.” So the description that he gives here of the Chaldean is of faithless individual who shall surely come to an end. He is characterized by his desire for wine.

Now, the Chaldeans were noted for drinking wine and we have a very notable chapter in the Bible in which we have this illustrated in the great chapter of Daniel, chapter 5, Belshazzar at the feast. And that the Babylonian empire, the Chaldean empire is descriptive of the taste that the Chaldeans had for drinking. There was a sign many years ago when Falstaff’s advertisement was, “The finest product of the brewer’s art.” There was a sign on a West Texas churchyard with a picture of a drunk and the words under the picture of the drunk, “The finished product of the brewer’s art.” [Laughter]

Now, there are some things that we could say about drinking wine and I don’t want to step on anybody’s toes. I know that in this audience there are people who are teetotalers and you really think that the Bible teaches that you should not touch any kind of strong drink. And let me say this, that if that is your feeling from the study of the word of God, it is not my desire at all to disturb you in any way. There are differences of opinion on this point and I recognize the fact that not only may I be wrong, but those who hold my particular view may be wrong. I do not think that the Bible forbids the taking of a glass of wine or of intoxicating beverages although the Bible stringently speaks against drunkenness. As far as I can tell the statements in passages such as John chapter

2, 1 Corinthians chapter 11 in which there was drunkenness at the Lord’s table indicate that in the early church, as was customary in those climates and in those places, the early Christians did not hesitate to take a glass of wine at their meals. It may have even been necessary for purposes of hygiene.

I know that in many places today that is done by Christians in Europe. Among some of the godliest of the Christians wine is put upon their table at their principal meals as a matter of custom. They do not get intoxicated but it is the drink of the table. On the other hand, the Old Testament Scriptures speak very strongly too against drunkenness. And in addition, there are passages in the word of God that are warnings to us in case we feel rather strong about our ability to be able to drink a little wine without any problems.

Now, I grew up in a society in which a great deal of social drinking took place in my home for a long time, although in the latter days of my father’s life generally speaking, the drinks that we used to have before we had supper and the cordials that we had afterwards were dispensed with, but the society in which I grew up was a society in which this was common. I would like to have a dollar for all of the cocktail parties that I have attended during the days when I attended debutante parties every Christmas, for that was the debutante season in Charleston, South Carolina. And I’ve seen a whole lot of evil come from drinking, some evil in my own family and some in parts of my family that are rather close to me but not in my immediate family. And I know that in the Old Testament the text of Scriptures says “Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly, at the last it bites like a serpent and stings like a viper.”

Now, I take that text to mean not that we are to not ever take a drink of wine or of an alcoholic beverage, but I take that text to be a very strong warning to any who feels so self sufficient in their strength that they do not know the difference between the use of alcohol and the abuse of it. And it seems to me that while we want to avoid the legalism of teetotalism, we also should take very, very seriously the warnings of Scriptures of the

dangers of a good thing. So when we look at the picture of the Chaldeans who were notable for their wine drinking, it should be a warning to us, and I leave the rest to you because I think this is a matter of our own conscious as we ourselves study Holy Scripture.

I think there is something else we should bear in mind too. We should be careful as Christians to avoid being the means of others falling because they may not have the strength that you and I have. I look back in my own past and I have very close friend who is at the present time is near death. I was the one who gave him his first drink and his life has been characterized by some excessive drinking. He is not a drunkard but by some excessive drinking which has hurt him since that time. So it is a serious matter and we should, I think, take it as a serious matter.

Just this past week I had occasion to discuss with someone the question of the Lord’s table and the use of wine at the Lord’s table. As most of you know in this room, we do use wine at the Lord’s table, but in our trays we have, as a custom, in the center of the tray, grape juice for those who may have particular feelings about wine are who may have weaknesses and wish not to take even just a little bit of alcoholic beverage. I think that’s right.

Now, looking at the failure of the faithless, these are the Chaldeans, characterized by the drunkenness, the wickedness that arises out of it. The description given of the Chaldeans is very vivid. “He enlarges his appetite like Sheol and he’s like death never satisfied. He also gathers to himself all nations and collects to himself all peoples.” It seems to me the point of this is a Chaldean is a world conqueror and the old Babylonian empire was a powerful empire characterized by swallowing up smaller nations and attempting make them their own. Then secondly or B, the prophet speaks of the faithful and he says “Really the future belongs to them.” Notice the last clause of verse 4 “But the righteous will live by his faith.”

Now, you know, of course, that the expression “The just shall live by faith” is an expression that the New Testament picks up and makes a great deal over. The Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 1 in verse 17 cites this passage really to buttress his statement concerning the theme of his greatest epistle, the Epistle to the Romans. He speaks about the Gospel and he says, “It’s the power of God unto salvation” to everyone that believeth because it in there is revealed “righteousness of God from faith to faith.” And then to support the idea that righteousness comes to us by faith and not by good works he says “For it stands written or as it stands written, the just shall live by faith” and he cites this passage from Habakkuk chapter 2, verse 4.

Now, Habakkuk chapter 2, verse 4 was not original with the prophet Habakkuk. He got it from someone else. We often hear people saying, I may have made this statement here myself last week, I don’t remember, we often hear people say that the Apostle Paul was the son of Habakkuk and Luther or Augustine was the grandson of Habakkuk and Luther was the great, great, grandson of Habakkuk. The truth of the matter is he was the great, great, great, grandson of Moses who said concerning Abraham’s faith in Genesis chapter 15, verse 6 “And he believed in the Lord and he accounted it to him for righteousness.” It’s very plain as you study Habakkuk and look at the Hebrew text of Habakkuk chapter 2, verse 4 that he has come to this revelation of truth, “The just shall live by faith” through the terminology of Genesis chapter 16, verse 6.

Now, that is very important because there’s been a great deal of discussion over the meaning of the term “faith” in Habakkuk 2:4. Some of the liberals, in fact I read today a Jewish commentary on this particular passage, in which the commentator as many of our modern commentators say “Paul misunderstood the prophesy of Habakkuk. Really what Habakkuk said was “the righteous will live by faithfulness” faithfulness to the moral law of God, for example.” And so they accused the apostle of not being able to read the Old Testament very well.

I always thought that was the funniest thing that a person living eighteen hundred years later could claim to know more about the Old Testament than the Apostle Paul. It takes really the height of arrogant pride to make such a claim. When the Apostle Paul had given us some of the most unusual and most insightful, to use a term I don’t like, insightful understanding of the Old Testament than anyone has ever given. If we have Paul standing over here and all of the rest of the modern commentators standing over here you can be sure, if there is a call, choose you this day whom you will serve I’ll be over here [Laughter] with the Apostle Paul when it comes to biblical interpretation. So I’m very suspicious when somebody says the Apostle Paul misunderstood the Old Testament.

I just don’t when I look at the modern interpretism, I’ve been in the classroom with many of these men and they have a hard time finding verses in the Bible as a general rule and they’re telling us they understand the book of Habakkuk better than the Apostle Paul. It just is, it’s almost ludicrous, but nevertheless it’s a hard fact of life. It is often said Paul misunderstood this passage. What he really meant, the prophet, the righteous will live by his adherence to the moral law. They overlook, because most of them don’t read the Hebrew text, they overlook the connection between this passage and Genesis chapter 15 in verse 6.

They overlook a lot of other things. I wish I had time to talk about this the use of the Old Testament in the Old Testament but let me just mention one or two things. In the first place the word *emuwnab* which means faith does at time mean faithfulness and really I think it means something like faithfulness here. But it does not mean faithfulness in keeping the moral law. It means a firm reliance upon God, a faithful trust in him. *Emuwn*, the verb, means “to be firm” or “to be steady,” and that’s a word incidentally from which we get our amen or say it with more dignity, amen. That’s the word which is translated and he believed in the Lord. Dr. Chafer used to like to say that really when Abraham looked up and saw the stars in the sky, he amenated God. So Abraham was told your seed will be as the stars in the heaven, Abraham said, “amen Lord.” That’s faith,

that’s the essence of faith, Dr. Chafer used to say and he would like to say this verb is *emuwn* from which we get amen, and he “amened” the Lord.

Now, the key thing about *emuwnab* is that it refers to a firmness or a steadiness or a firm reliance, not upon man, not upon the moral law, but upon God. Now, the proof of this, as I say, it’s based on Genesis 15:6 and that’s what we read in Genesis 15:6, Abraham believed in the Lord and he accounted it to him for righteous. So that the *emuwnab*, the faithfulness, referred to here is the faithfulness expressed in Abraham’s attitude toward the promises of God. Furthermore, in Nehemiah chapter 9 in verse 7, about verse 7 through verse 8, Abraham is referred to again and there he is called “faithful Abraham” and the term that is used is *n’emuwn* the participle from the new found form for the verb amen. And again it is based on what happened in Genesis 15:6 from the context and he called “faithful.” So the faithfulness of Abraham is the faithfulness of looking up, seeing the promises of God, and believing the promises of God. So that what is meant then in the “just shall live by faithfulness;” is the just shall live by his faithful trust in the Lord that’s what it is meant by it. And Paul is right and those commentators who accuse him of being wrong are, you know, what are wrong. [Laughter] That’s right.

Now, this is the great text of Martin Luther, “The Just Shall Live by Faith.” Luther tells us in many of his writings, he gives us different descriptions of how he came to the knowledge of the truth of God. But he says, concerning the expression of righteousness of God, which is referred to here when we say, “the just, the righteous ones shall live by faith” he understood the righteousness of God as the righteousness which gives each one of us our due. So he thought of righteousness and the righteousness of God is that by which he judges us. So whenever he ran across the term the righteousness of God he trembled.

He was so disturbed over his relationship with the Lord that he tried everything. He tried penance and prayer and all kinds of flagellations of the flesh in order to gain some merit before God. He even speaks about himself being exhausted from trying to do

the things that might enable him to gain merit before God because he was afraid of this righteousness of God. He said he thought of the Lord as an angry God sitting on a rainbow waiting to hurl thunderbolts toward men, the righteousness of God. But then how could Paul call his gospel righteousness, that is, how could he say that through the good news a righteousness of God was conferred upon men. So that led him to the truth and then he said “It seemed to me as if I had been born again, it seemed to me as if I had entered paradise. The very expression that used to cause such fear to me and trembling became the means by which I entered into the experience of the right relationship with the Lord.” He said “The very phrase the righteousness of God which I hated before was the one that I now love the best of all.” That is how that message of Paul’s became for me the gateway to paradise. The just shall live by faith and out of Luther’s reflections upon this text came the Protestant reformation and no doubt, no doubt, came each one of you and the experience of sitting here tonight listening the exposition of Holy Scripture because you can be sure if we had not had that reformation, humanly speaking, we wouldn’t be sitting here tonight listening to the exposition of the word of God.

What is the faith that saves? Why the faith that saves is simply the faith that accepts the person and work of the Lord, Jesus Christ and cries out he was wounded for my transgressions, he was bruised for my iniquities, the chastisement of my peace has fallen upon him and by his stripes I am healed. That’s the righteousness, the faith that justifies, the faith that cries out, trusting the person and work of the Lord Jesus.

Well now, we could talk about this for a long time because there are so many wonderful truths expressed in it, we’ll just have to save that for some other time but I want you to notice this. That the faithful man is the just man and the just man is the one who has faith in God. I want to say that for this reason. There are lots of people who think that a man can be just and not have any faith in God. That is impossible. It is impossible for an upright man according to human standards to be truly just. The man who has true faith is just and the just man is the man who has faith.

Now, the reason for that should be obvious because let’s assume that we have a man who is just according to human standards but he doesn’t believe in the Lord God and in the Lord Jesus Christ. Why he has committed the greatest injustice of all. He has insulted the throne of heaven; he is in wrong relationship to the one being who matters most. So how can a person be a just person when he has committed the greatest injustice of insulting the holy God and not believing in him? So you see it is the just man who has faith and the faithful man or the believing man who is righteous. Now, I’d like to develop that because that needs some development but I’ll leave it for you to think about.

We come now to the five-fold anathema pronounced upon the Chaldeans. And the apostle begins with an introduction and he concludes with a conclusion and in between is five woes, woes against plundering, against greed, against violence, against debauchery, and against idolatry. I’ve often wondered where the Lord Jesus learned to say woe. Well I think he probably learned to say woe from Joseph and Mary first of all and then they learned it from the Old Testament. The Bible is full of a lot of woes and here are five of them.

Now, the introduction begins in verse six with “Will not all of these (that is all these victims of the Babylonia aggression) “will not all of these take up a taunt song against him even mockery and insinuations against him and say woe to him who increases what is not his for how long and makes himself rich with loans.” Now, in the introduction the prophet says that the following passage is a kind of a taunting poem in which there are riddles that are given about the Chaldean, biblical riddles. And he is going to speak then the five woes. Let me just briefly go through them. I think they are pretty much self explanatory. The woe against plundering verses 6 through 8 let me read verses 7 and 8.

“Will not your creditors rise up suddenly and those who collect from you awaken indeed you will become plunder for them because you have looted many nations. All the

remainder of the peoples will loot you because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land, to the town and all its inhabitants.”

So the Chaldean who is as rapacious as a usurer is bitten by others later. Incidentally, the expression we use “Put the bite on someone,” you know, what that means don’t you? “I put the bite on him.” Well that expression is used right here and it says that those upon whom the Chaldeans put the bite on are going to put the bite on them. That’s the meaning of the expression, “Will not your creditors rise up suddenly and those who collect from you awaken.” Now, the suddenly that is referred to here refers to the sudden destruction to the Babylonian power by Cyrus the Persian who took Babylon in 539 BC and took it in a night according not only to the Scriptures but history outside the Bible.

The second woe is a woe against greed verses 9 through 11. We don’t need this because we don’t have any greed in the twentieth century, but we’ll read through it anyway.

“Woe to him who gets evil gains for his house to put his nest on high, to be delivered from the hand of calamity (you see these are descriptions of the Chaldean) you have devised a shameful thing for you house by cutting off many peoples so your sinning against yourself. Surely the stone will cry out from the wall and the rafter will answer from the framework.”

Now, this woe against greed is, of course, a woe against the Chaldeans for their greed in overcoming the nations about them and making them their own property. There has been an inscription found with the words that the Chaldean king wanted to make and I’m going to read it for you. In one of these buildings inscriptions Nebachazzar states that one of his chief purposes in strengthening the walls of Babylon and beautifying the city

was “To make an everlasting name for his reign.” And then he prays and this is the prayer of Nebachazzar according to the inscriptions, “Oh Marduk, lord of the gods, my divine creator” you see he was a very religious man “my divine creator before thee may my deeds be pious, may they endure forever, life for many generations and abundant posterity, a secure throne, and a long reign grant as they gift. Truly thou art my deliverer and help, oh Marduk, by the faithful word that changes not may my weapons advance be dreadful and crush the arms of the foe.” He has high flying plans which were rudely shattered; in fact, his ruthless cutting off of many people in his adoption of the Assyrian melting pot system of deportation was ultimately the ruin of him.

And the description here is so beautiful. The picture here is of a house. He has built a great temple for himself, but when the destruction of the Lord comes then we read in the last part of verse 11 about the stone and the rafter. We have here the creaking of the beams connected with the timber and the wood work of the roof and the grating of the cracking stone walls, one can hear a kind of awesome dirge, the stones intoning the chant, and the beams responding in a kind of antiphonal death song until they also crash down into a heap of ruins and ashes. So you find the stones as they are crumbling and the rafters as they are crumbling speaking back and forth to each other. Who can possibly say that Habakkuk was not a great author?

Now, then we have the third woe and the third woe is against violence. We read verses 12 through 14.

“Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and founds a town with violence. Is it not indeed from the Lord of hosts that peoples toil for fire, nations grow weary for nothing. For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”

That last verse is sometimes misunderstood. It’s not simply a prophecy of a glorious future; it really is a guarantee of the future doom of Babylon. That’s the point of it here because he said the earth is going to be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah not Marduk, and so as waters cover the sea and so if the knowledge of Jehovah is going to be that which fills the earth and the knowledge of Marduk is going to be no longer. And if that’s true then Nebachazzar and the Babylonian empire are going to be no longer either. So while that’s a promise for us the prophecy of doom for the Chaldeans.

Now, we have finally or next, the woe against debauchery verses 15 through 17.

“Woe to you who make your neighbors drink, who mix in your venom even to make them drunk so as to look on their nakedness, you will be filled with disgrace rather than honor. Now you yourself drink and expose your own nakedness. The cup of the Lord in the Lord’s right hand will come around to you and utter disgrace will come upon your glory, for the violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you and the devastation of its beasts by which you terrified them because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land to the town and all its inhabitants.”

It’s a beautiful picture here of how the nation under the figure of drink is shown to be intoxicated by flattery and ultimately destroyed. And we have here in verse 16; you see the figure of the drink is to show the Chaldeans destruction, we have here in verse 16 the stages. “Now you yourself drink.” And then the next thing is the nakedness because drunkenness makes us do things that we would not normally do because our minds and our bodies come under the control of strong drink as all drinkers know. So the first step is the drinking, the next step is the nakedness or exposure, and then the third step; it’s not so obvious here, and the utter disgrace that Hebrew word that was related to vomit. And so what a picture the word of God is full of reality; the picture of the drinking and

then the nakedness and, finally, the vomit of the man who was passed out because of his drunkenness.

And finally, the woe against idolatry verses 18 and 19.

“What prophet is the idol when its maker has carved it or an image, a teacher of falsehood for its maker trust in his own handiwork when he fashions speechless idols. Woe to him who says to a piece of wood awake to a dumb stone arise (and notice this next clause) and that is your teacher. The Hebrew says that a teacher? A dumb idol, that a teacher? Behold it’s overlaid with gold and silver and there is no breath at all inside.” And finally the conclusion comes in verse 20, as I conclude “But the Lord is in his holy temple that all the earth be silent before him.”

The point of this, of course, is that the Lord is sovereign, omnipotent, and holy and is in control of all things. It is foolish for man to rage against him. Let the earth submit and wait in silence for his coming in judgment.

Now, isn’t it interesting, I know, the man who lead me to the Lord was Donald Grey Barnhouse and I grew up in the Presbyterian Church and you know how, is our organist here tonight? I have attended many a church service in which we’ve sat down and just before the eleven o’clock service and the things that Dr. Barnhouse said are so true. He said he wondered what musician went through the Bible until he found this text in Habakkuk chapter 2, verse 20, “The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silent before him.” And he used this horrible and sadly ludicrous passage for a means of inviting people to quietness before the morning service.

He said “The Lord is in his holy temple” you remember “The Lord put us in his holy temple, let all the earth keep silence, keep silence before Him.” “How horrifying” Dr. Barnhouse used to say “They’ve made it sound as if the prophet were giving an antiphonal answer to the church bells as though he were saying its eleven o’clock

Sunday morning, it’s eleven o’clock Sunday morning let everybody quite down the church service is about to begin.” This text doesn’t mean a thing like that. If we want to know the meaning of this text we ought to go into a law court in which God is exercising judgment. And the point of the text is expressed when we think of a man sitting before a judge and then the crier stands up like they still do in New York state, I understand, and says “O yea, O yea, this court is not called to order and the judge comes in and takes his gavel and strikes the desk in token of the fact that now we’re going to hear a case and judgment is going be pronounced. That’s the picture that is found here. This is not a call to worship; this is a thunderous call of an outraged God against a world that has too long mocked him. It is a call against the wicked Chaldeans and any other unrighteous people who do no believe the divine revelation concerning the son the Lord Jesus.

Now, I hope I haven’t ruined your Sunday morning meditations before the morning service but truth is more important than all of our discoveries and machinations in order to please people who sit in a pew.

Now, our time is up and we must stop. I know you need something to sustain you for the remainder of the night.

Let’s close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for these words from Holy Scripture and we do pray that we may be as responsive as the prophet speaks concerning when he says, “The just shall live by faith.”

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.